



# Maricopa County

## News Release

### Department of Public Health

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## Monsoon Hits, West Nile Precautions Crucial

PHOENIX – Maricopa County received its first substantial monsoon storm last night, increasing the need for residents to be vigilant in taking precautions against West Nile Virus. Currently Maricopa County leads the nation in reported cases of West Nile Virus infections and new cases are being investigated daily. Mosquitoes thrive in water and humidity, and County health officials are reminding the community that they are their best defense against the disease.

“Obviously, heavy rainfall increases the number of standing water pools where mosquitoes can breed,” said Dr. Jonathan Weisbuch, director of the Maricopa County Department of Public Health. “Since there is no vaccine or effective treatment for West Nile Virus, it is imperative that people do whatever they can to limit their chances of contracting the disease.”

There are several measures each individual can take to prevent WNV infection:

- Eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around the home by removing standing water in potted plants, tires and other containers.
- Repair window and door screens to keep mosquitoes out of the home.
- Avoid outdoor activity before dawn and after dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- When outdoors wear long sleeves and long pants to prevent mosquito bites.
- When outdoors wear a mosquito repellant containing DEET (follow label instructions, especially for use on children).
- Report dead birds to local authorities.

Valuable information on mosquito reduction and avoidance, and dead bird reporting can be found at: <http://www.maricopa.gov/envsvc/water/vector/backyard.asp> or by calling the Environmental Services Complaint number: (602) 506-6616.

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The Public Information Hotline phone number is 602-747-7500 and it operates from 8am to 8pm, 7-days a week.

This hotline will provide current health information regarding West Nile Virus. This information includes:

- a) General information on West Nile Virus
- b) Information about prevention of WNV (mosquito reduction and personal protective strategies)
- c) Instructions for reporting mosquito complaints and dead birds
- d) Web sites for CDC, the Arizona Department of Health Services, and the Maricopa County Department of Public Health

Maricopa County Department of Public Health and Maricopa County Environmental Services Department will continue working to protect the community with an enhanced surveillance program including sampling and testing of mosquitoes and dead birds, and evaluation of equine neurological illnesses and human cases of meningitis and encephalitis.

WNV is transmitted to humans by the bite on an infected mosquito, however less than 1 percent of all mosquitoes are infected. Approximately 20 percent of people infected with West Nile Virus will feel symptoms. Most people who experience symptoms will have:

- Fever
- Headache
- Body aches
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Sometimes swollen lymph glands or a skin rash on the chest, stomach and back.

A small percentage of people who are infected with WNV will experience severe symptoms such as meningitis, encephalitis, paralysis and even death. Persons over the age of 50 are generally at a higher risk for severe symptoms.

More information can be found at:

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm> or by calling 888-246-2675 (English), 888-246-2875 (Spanish), 866-874-2646 (TTY).

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